

Princess's Spirit Social Ideas #2:

An Adaptive Family Values Conscience

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Chapter 1: The Conscience of Adaptive Family Values

This is a book where I will share some of what I believe, in my conscience, to be good social change for society. As discussed in Book 1 of this series, the key to a better society, and the key to applying the Princess's Spirit values in society, is discussing social issues on a freedom of conscience basis. I understand that not everyone will agree with everything I say in this book, but sharing ideas is important, and I hope people are open-minded enough to think about what they read. I understand that not everyone will see marriage and family the way I see it, and that's fine. But I need to put my views out there, just the same, or how can we have a healthy discussion? Whilst in this cultural war environment people tend to think along cultural war lines, I can assure you that I don't participate in that war. None of what is in this book has a hidden agenda or is meant to be judgemental. Just don't take anything in here personally, even if you don't agree with it.

The family as an institution has existed for the entire duration of human civilization, and in all but a few unfortunate exceptional cases, has served to support and enrich the lives of humans in countless generations. It is therefore just natural that supporting the family, and supporting values that support families, for

example encouraging the life-long commitment of spouses, and the responsibilities of family members to one another, are held in high regard by most people across the world.

As such, it is common for politicians and community groups to campaign on platforms of family values. But as to what such values are, and how they can be applied, there seems to be no clear agreement. Socialist and left-liberal politicians would highlight welfare programs and workers' rights as key policies that will benefit the millions of working families out there, for example. Conservative politicians clearly do not agree with this platform, yet they also say they are for family values, in some other way.

Sadly, there have been many instances of what I believe to be maladaptive applications of 'family values', bringing the whole concept into disrepute. A friend of mine, who is a gay man, once told me he could not support 'family values' because it had been used as a cover for anti-gay policies by conservative politicians. Whilst this is sad, it also highlights how values need to be applied adaptively. I firmly believe that

homosexuality is something one is born with, and discrimination on the grounds of homosexuality is therefore akin to racial and sexual discrimination. There is no place for such discrimination in my version of adaptive family values. On a more positive note, however, there have been calls in recent years for legislating marriage equality based on the ideal of extending marriage, an institution steeped in family values, to every member of society, and to therefore encourage its uptake by more couples. That is what I would call an adaptive application of family values.

The rest of this book will be dedicated to ideas of how we can adaptively apply the ideals of family values to modern society.

Chapter 2: Justifying a New Era of Family Values

What is Missing

My movement, a combination of more 'traditional' aspects of family values, and a 'lovefest' of human rights based progressive ideals, does not seem all that logical. Definitely, it defies the traditional stereotypes of the left-right division. I have thus been described by my readers as both 'very liberal', and 'very conservative'.

However, this is just because everyone has been using the tainted lens of the contemporary cultural war in the Western world to view everything. Let me put it this way: the arguments for discrimination, racism, homophobia and sexism will end in nothing as one day soon we will move forward and embrace equality anyway. Those who support discrimination are simply on the wrong side of history. This battle for equality is just a contemporary issue. However, the argument and struggle for a society marked by stable, healthy familial structures is an ongoing project that will benefit generations to come. It is a struggle that must be contributed to in a ongoing manner, and the battle is timeless.

The two are also actually synergistic with each

other - in a world of equality, families will be more able to support their children who are 'different' - thus contributing to familial stability, for example. Ultimately, both fights come together to better the experience of humanity, in the long run.

So if I believe the battle for equality is just contemporary, why am I jumping up and down about it and spending that much energy on it? This is because I believe that, if we delay equality by ten years, it will be ten years too late to save some people from harm - a lot of people indeed.

I believe a lot of people actually believe in the co-existence of these two ideals, but due to the media being dominated by a few, many are led to believe, from what they see in the media, that they can't coexist. That is why besides just talking about it I have put out examples / prototypes of new models of media that allow us to express this ideal, this hope. However, the work of one, otherwise very busy, person is not enough. I hope that there will be more self made stars out there who will follow this lead, and contribute to the ongoing fight that will benefit humanity.

A Liberal for Traditional Values?

A common assumption is that if you are in support of traditional values you go for the conservative parties and toe their line on cultural matters. But then, I don't think that necessarily works. Consider the following reasons:

1) Conservative parties are there for the economic policies mainly, with the social policies little more than decorative. Their main aim is to promote unrestrained capitalism which will harm the economy in the end (as seen in 2008) and abolish all welfare so that traditional institutions like the family end up collapsing.

2) The 'conservative' cultural line is not what everyone believes how traditional values should be implemented in today's world. Take gay relationships as an example. Gay relationships are here to stay, even the homophobes must concede. There are two ways to deal with the increasing number of open gay relationships - either you provide for a structure to include them in the stable family model that has worked over the years, or you protect the formerly exclusively heterosexual institutions by excluding gay people, and encourage

them to take on 'alternative lifestyles' as a side effect. I happen to prefer the former, but the 'conservatives' happen to prefer the latter. This debate is mirrored in many religious institutions, with a rift opening in many churches because of the same argument. Which brings me to my third point.

3) When we can't really agree on how to get things done, even if we are onto the same general idea, we must agree to disagree, and see which way turns out to be the best. That means we must have the freedom, each of us, to decide to do the right thing. I don't believe in the freedom to do just anything, but I believe in the freedom to do what is right, and that, ironically, requires the freedom to do what some believe is wrong too (since we sometimes have to agree to disagree). The conservative approach to things is that only ONE way of implementing traditional values is allowed, meaning that all other ways would be disallowed. Have you ever thought for a while, for example, that a ban on gay marriage, as much as being religiously motivated, is actually stampeding on the freedom of religion?

Justification for the minimum of freedom

Some people just want to outlaw everything in life that they don't like. Some are more moderate, and just want to outlaw things that seem offensive to a group of people. Things from alternative cultural practices to different beliefs, however, get occasionally targeted as things to outlaw too.

The truth is that, we live in a land where we must tolerate what each other does. I believe that a life without alcohol at all would be good for all, but I recognise that drinking in moderation does nobody harm indeed, and I am in no position to judge people for doing that. What I can do is, however, to promote a no-alcohol lifestyle to more people, and let them take it up voluntarily.

I also recognise that the way we currently do the 'war on drugs' is more harmful than good (just read all the evidence out there if you don't believe me), and must be changed, in particular we should not persecute individuals for their personal drug use habits. This is regardless of my otherwise antagonistic attitude towards mind altering drugs - we just have to do the

thing that provides the best outcome for everyone.

Nor are we more than mere mortals indeed. How can we know what we want for the rest of the world is always right? We can say we think they are in the wrong, but we cannot say that we definitely know that they are in the wrong - in what position are we to say this?

Therefore, as supported by multiple examples over controversial issues in real life, I believe that letting people have their own freedom to live as they wish without persecution (unless they are doing another person harm), even if they use that freedom to do something that we really cannot agree on, is a basic value that we must promote and preserve.

Taking Back Family Values

We should take back the term 'family values'. Long abused by the far right, especially in the USA, 'family values' means things that work for the benefit of our families, and has nothing to do with religious fundamentalism or discrimination.

Supporting same-sex marriage is consistent with family values. It supports a same-sex couple to stay together for longer, and provides a good backdrop for them to raise any children they may have between them. Removing discrimination itself is also consistent with family values - we all have family members who are 'different' and are at risk of society's discrimination - we can only help them, and help them all, by removing all forms of discrimination.

Maintaining a living wage for everybody is also consistent with family values. People need to not have to work for 70 hours a week to provide for their family to be able to spend quality time with their family. Obviously, families function better when their financial stress is taken off them. Therefore, no matter how good the capitalist system may sound in terms of profits, I will

remain a family-values bound social democrat.

Promises vs Results: Some Pro-Life Talk

It is well known that the biggest abortion decline in recent US history came about during the Clinton administration, with his policy that abortion should be safe, legal and rare. (The rate did continue to decline in the Bush years, but I just can't see that it was anything that Bush did - the Clinton policies were simply continuing to work).

Now to the 'Big-C Conservatives' who proclaimed themselves to be pro-life. They, however, also want to make sure that poor people did not have the means to raise a child properly in today's world. Their strategy is simple: just outlaw abortion. They don't seem to need to take care of the backyard abortion problem either. Just look at Poland: abortion officially outlawed, but a high rate of backyard abortion persist. Looks like these 'conservatives' are playing out of sight, out of mind rather than facing the reality.

I am not somebody who believes in

abortion-on-demand. However, I favour approaches that work. I can't endorse policy that comes from pure doctrine and doesn't stand up to common logic. Nor do I believe that we should take away people's right to do according to their conscience in controversial matters that don't have a clearly agreed on answer - for example, what to do in the case that the fetus is severely deformed, or what to do in the case that the mother's life is not threatened but her physical health (not emotional wellbeing) is irreversibly damaged by the pregnancy?

Conservatism Failed Because It Is False Advertising

Conservatism says it is for freedom. They love to say how conservatism is based on libertarianism. Well, that seems quite like my approach - all the things I support are geared towards providing more freedom for people. Except that we actually are not fellow travellers politically. Why? Because conservatism, at least in its early 21st century incarnation, does not stand for freedom - not anymore. Not when it stand against freedom of religion, as in the denial of churches and religious organisations to marry same-sex couples in accordance with their doctrine.

I am told that I do share a few causes with the conservatives, time and time again. However, I would not trust that they would do anything for me in that area either. Why? Just look at their track record. Conservatism fought drugs, and drugs won. Conservatism fought divorce, and divorce won. Conservatism fought abortion, and abortion won. Conservatism fought crime,

and crime won. Conservatism fought casual sex, and casual sex won.

Need I say more? Conservatism has never delivered a bit of what they promised. Except for one thing - religious dogma. Why? Because for them, all the above are nice to have, but religious dogma is their goal. Conservatism in the 21st century is about one thing - the triumph of dogmatic, literalist interpretation of religion. No wonder conservatism, which promised so many wonderful things indeed, still failed, as seen by its support rate in the young generation today.

Uneasy Facts We Must Face

So many people out there claim to be trying to protect the family, the basis unit of society itself, from forces that will destroy it. Which sounds like a noble cause. But then, who really has been trying to do this? Politicians have been known to start movements in the name of one thing whilst serving the purpose of another.

In Western countries today, one of the biggest groups who claim to be protecting the family unit are those seeking to legislate against gay rights and gay marriage. However, their arguments make no sense at all. Gay and lesbian people comprise of about 2% of society, and any policy to do with a minority this small will not have a noticeable effect in the composition or conventions of society. The only effect gay rights will have on society is to reaffirm its commitment to tolerance and equality for all. Furthermore, the current crisis of family breakdown began long before the gay rights debate, and so far, countries that have attained full gay equality in law have not seen

an impact on the health of their families. This just shows that the health of families in society as a whole are mainly the product of the 98% heterosexual population, and to scapegoat gay and lesbian people is just plain wrong.

Obviously, we need to target the solution at where the problem is. In this case, since the problem is not with gay rights, being opposed to gay rights will fix nothing for the health of families. I guess measures to save relationships from divorce (for example by increasing availability of family therapy), to make cheating on a spouse socially more unacceptable (through cultural campaigns), combined with adequate social welfare, and legislation for reasonable working hours for all, will go a much longer way. These are simple answers that have always been there - just not easy ones.

Putting Perspective on Historical Homophobia

Historically, most cultures were homophobic. This is a fact that conservatives have used to justify their continued homophobia. However, let's put this fact in the light of the context. Until recent decades, homosexuality was assumed to be not a natural sexual orientation. As a persecuted minorities, gays often practiced their homosexuality under cover of a heterosexual marriage, further reinforcing this idea. Homosexuality was thus seen as having additional, extramarital relationships that come from lustful desires that are unnatural. Obviously, most people do view having additional, extramarital relationships that come from lustful desires that are unnatural to be immoral.

Now, we have found that homosexuality is a natural sexual orientation, and one can be a committed lifelong monogamous person even if one is homosexual. Therefore, the idea that homosexuality is having additional, extramarital

relationships that come from lustful desires that are unnatural is discredited. Thus homophobia itself should have been discredited too.

A Brave Idea I Have: Let's Start From the 1950s Again

Whilst the progress in equality of the last 60 years has brought enormous benefit to almost every section of the community, there now appears to be certain failings that make full progress in that area hard to achieve. For example, the rise of the populist far right in certain countries, and the continued popular refusal of legal same-sex marriage points to this. Which means it may be a time for a rethink. What do we actually stand for? We stand for equal opportunity and tolerance. How can we apply these principles more broadly, and make them connect with more people? This sort of rethink has been taking place everywhere. However, it has not been very successful either.

A more basic rethink may rather start like this, however. Let's think back to the 1950s, before the progress even started. What do we need to change from 1950s society to the ideals that we stand for? Focus on getting those changes out, and really focus. Focus on communicating

those changes that we really should stand for, rather than the assortment of campaign baggage that have arose in the past five decades.

For example, multicultural and interfaith tolerance and LGBT rights are essential, but the change in family composition is not (except for equal gender rights and support for LGBT families - but there can still be stable families with these things in mind). Whilst I would not advocate for government to get involved in the latter either due to the risk of other repercussions, we should not, in my opinion, oppose those who don't tolerate the radical change in family composition, for this change is not really part of our agenda. We should, however, spend every ounce of energy showing that we totally disagree with those who are racist and homophobic, for they stand for the very antithesis to our movement. They are the very ones standing in the way of reaching our ideal vision of society.

Chapter 3: Applying Adaptive Family Values to Social Situations

The Alternative to Censorship

I have previously said that I would prefer to live in a culture without obscenity flying around everywhere. I want the same for my family. I believe many want the same.

Some have turned to arguing for more government censorship. But due to the current political climate, that could be quite a double-edged sword easily abused by the religious right.

Therefore, I believe the better way is by building your own culture around entertainment and inspiration you find suitable, and then sharing it with others who want to live the same way. The religious right have done so successfully for decades, so why shouldn't we?

When It's Family vs Fundamentalist Religion

Religious fundamentalists often hide behind the veneer of family values. But what if valuing your family contradicts the dogma of fundamentalist religion? Their record on this is pretty clear.

Unless you think that cutting off a gay family member is consistent with valuing your family, it is clear which way they choose when it comes to family vs religion.

I personally value family above all else, including ALL religious dogma (including those from the religion I am raised up in). Family is more important than religious dogma to me, and if the two conflicted with each other, it is always the latter that will give way. Can you make the same commitment?

Facebook Divorces: New Challenges Posed by the New World

It's sad but true: marriage counsellors are citing social networks as a reason for increasing separations and divorces. One of the reasons they say is because bored middle-aged people are reconnecting with their previous partners. Divorce law firms also said that facebook has been cited in a proportion of their cases last year.

The new world brings new possibilities. Whilst some of these are good, others are not quite so good. These not so good ones can include bitter challenges to otherwise happy families. In the face of these challenges, I believe we need to really look into strengthening the basis for relationships and families. The 'we can always divorce if we grow apart' attitude of the last 40 years is just not sustainable anymore. A new cultural paradigm needs to grow out of this crisis.

Family Rights is Good Policy for All

Let's talk about an important issue: supporting families' rights to keep themselves intact and away from those who may harm them even out of good intentions.

The issue of legislating to prevent governments from abusing power and taking children away from families that they merely don't approve of (rather than as a last resort to prevent physical harm) is often seen as a side issue. However, it should be an issue everybody should be concerned about.

Many otherwise idealistic progressives feel that there is nothing wrong with the current powers government have over families. However, in more conservative jurisdictions (where they don't live anyway) parenting rights have been taken away because of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, for example. Therefore, there is a very progressive stake in protecting family rights as much as we can. Therefore, making the government give back

parenting rights to families is something which everyone, no matter their political views, should embrace.

Show the World there is No Need to Fear

As we champion for equal rights for everybody in society regardless of age, race, gender (which incorporates gender identity and sexual orientation in my view), and cultural background, we often find that the biggest hurdle is the fear of some people who believe this will be the end of stable, healthy society as we know it, society as we have lived throughout history.

Which is complete nonsense, most of us know. But still, we are having a hard time explaining this to those sceptics. However, there is a way - we can prove it. We can create an even more healthy society than the discriminatory version that dogmatic Big-C Conservatives offer as their alternative - we can beat them at their game, and still promote tolerance and equality.

We can create a culture with even more stable family structures than what they can dream of (presently, those theocons are doing nothing

about the divorce rate, the single most important factor in the current epidemic of family instability, nor are they doing anything about adultery). By creating a culture of transparency, we can create a culture where family members never have something to hide from one another, and where clean living is a real thing rather than a facade people put on and later found to be just that (Britney style). By making sure every child brought into this world as well as their parents will be adequately supported, we can drop the abortion rate to near zero and also reverse the birth rate decline.

To do all of the above would be in no way contradictory to equal rights for all, an improvement of civil rights and a strong tradition of liberty, multiculturalism and interfaith harmony, a job guarantee program and a health insurance program by the government. It will also show that you CAN create your own healthy culture of your vision WITHOUT forcing the rest of the world along, something dogmatic conservatives seem to forget all the time.

The Guidelines of Pro Family

I once read this in a book about America: life in America is about following rules, and there are indeed quite a lot of rules to be followed. But you also get to enjoy a lot of freedom too - as long as you obey the rules. In fact, many of those rules keep us safe, and therefore free to have our freedom. The important thing is that, as long as you obey the rules, you should be fine to do whatever you like with your life. Unlike in some other places, where unless things are specifically allowed, they are at risk of being disallowed at whim. The former fosters a creative and vibrant society, the latter is stifling.

Therefore, I want to initiate a movement to establish certain rules for being pro-family, and as long as you abide by these rules, the rest of your personal life is your freedom. I think the basic rules should be:

- 1) You are willing to establish a permanent relationship with one person during your lifetime.

2) You are willing to care for and, wherever possible, provide for your family. You will not sacrifice your family to a significant extent for example for work commitments on a long term basis.

I guess that maintains a clear way to lead a pro-family life, whilst allowing quite a lot of freedom to be either traditionalist or more experimental.

Ideas for Better Families in the Contemporary Context

Some people, including me, think that there is a major problem with the health of families. The major problem is that there is no major workable solution to that right now. Meanwhile, kids all over the world continue to suffer.

Therefore, here I propose some new ideas that may work:

The modern extended family

It is my belief that when families are small, individuals are disempowered. Unfortunately, in the modern world not everyone can live in a traditional extended family. However, the concept of the extended family can equally be transported to the modern world by including non-biological relationships (e.g. ceremonial brothers and sisters) in families. In fact, such relationships have been well honoured in places like ancient China for a long time!

Anticipating possible separation and prevent its bad effects on family

Face it, high separation rates are the fact of life everywhere in the West, and it is not going away soon. While we cannot change this fact, we can possibly prevent its worse effects from being exerted onto children.

Separating partners who have between them a biological or adopted child should try to maintain a relationship even after they are no longer a couple. An agreement by the separating partners to stay together, with contact assisted by other friends and relatives can be the solution. Obviously, big families (including the modern extended family as described above) would be more suitable for that, but any family can do that, really. For a couple that is likely to separate (like those who sign pre-nuptials in the expectation that there is a real chance separation may happen) should also pre-emptively work out how, if in the event of separation, their children can still be guaranteed a good childhood and upbringing.

Differentiation for people looking for permanent commitment as opposed to those who don't mind separation if things do not work out

There are two camps of people out there, and that is a fact we must face. Pretending that they are the same

would only jeopardise everybody. Those who take separation as a real possibility should have a chance to plan their relationship including that possibility. On the other hand, those who want the traditional forever should be able to know that they have found a partner who hold the same view on life and will not easily separate and 'find better' even if things don't work out well, so that they can plan a path that stretches 'till death do us part'. (I am of the latter camp, just for reference).

{Note: consistent with the point below, we are NOT advocating snobberism or differential treatment here, just people with different beliefs seeking their own kind}

Equality of all loving relationships, regardless of sexuality or governmental status

All this can only work if all loving relationships are respected equally. Snobberism in any way will cause people to shun some forms of commitment for some reason other than their real beliefs, and there will be pressure for people to act in ways that are not best for themselves. If you want to know where this will end up, just look at the number of middle aged gay guys who were pressured into heterosexual marriages years past,

ultimately coming out in middle age, and leaving behind a shattered family.

No bowing to dogmatists or fundamentalists in doing what is potentially best for families

These people can live the life they like, and they can be sure that they will have the freedom and respect from us to do so. However, they cannot breathe fear into all of our plans to move forward on a very important issue. Their 1950s styled manual for family is proving quite unsuitable for many others (expectedly), and our attempts at making change should not have to pander to their concerns, if the concerns are baseless (just like how gay marriage will supposedly undermine marriage - they can't tell us why, so why should we have to argue with them?).

Please Extend the Family Spirit to the Less Fortunate Ones

While we here sit here and talk about how we would like to build great, loving families of our own and turn the wider world into one too, we have to remember that many people are still struggling with misguided hate directed at them every day. In the worst case this can come from family members or close associates even, for example in the event somebody comes out as sexually diverse. Many families still don't have the idea that helping each other achieve their dreams is important, and instead are still trying to impose the traditional hierarchy's wishes on the less empowered members.

If we are serious about making this world into a great, loving family, we must try to reach out to these people, and make sure our efforts really get there. When one of them comes to us and ask for help, we must be able to extend it, and introduce them to the great family of anti-hate people that is there waiting for them. Every little bit of work helps.

A Healthy Culture for the Future

I wish that the children of our generation will have a healthy culture to grow up in. After all, this is the wish of many thinking adults across the world.

As to what is 'a healthy culture' - well, we can argue endlessly and we will not get an answer. So I think, for the sake of peace, we should agree to disagree - for now. There is no need to conclude the argument right now. The best solutions will be clear when at least two generations have passed from now.

What we need to do is to build the culture that we want our next generation to grow up in. We need to lend our help to bring to the culture out there justice, peace, equality and compassion. Sometimes we do that by movements to bring the world forward together. But then, sometimes, you cannot change everybody, and you should just build your culture from within a group of like-minded people and do your best to promote it.

The culture that I want to build is four-fold: a culture of equality and justice for everyone, a clean living lifestyle away from substances of abuse and sexualisation, a culture of achieving spiritual progress and moral living through interfaith goodwill and pluralism of religious backgrounds, and a culture that allows an individual to express themselves and be whoever they want to be. The first I would aim to bring to the whole world on a movemental basis - for example, through my support of the welfare state, good working conditions for all, marriage equality and the like. The latter three, however, I don't believe we can force onto everybody just yet. Therefore, I am striving to build a community with these values, still connected to the greater world, but definitely committed to these values beyond what is mainstream out there. I believe time will vindicate us - maybe in two or three generations' time - and people from other lifestyles and cultures will start to follow our example.

Justice and Equality are Not Against Traditions

Some people out there are blaming us, people who want to seek freedom and equality for everyone, as 'trying to destroy traditions'. I really cannot agree. What we are doing does nothing to destroy tradition as such. For example, legislating for gay marriage does next to nothing to affect the structure of families in society as a whole, because it affects only about 2% of the population anyway. Striving for progress on these things is an occupation built solely on the belief that society should be just and equal.

And if you want to bring back great traditions, or more accurately promote traditional ideals that have never been quite well achieved yet (which is a more realistic thing to say of most traditional ideals, from the healthy, stable family, to benevolent religion), then you could only do that on a society that is just and equal. Think again. If a society and the relationships in it were just and equal, I guess there is a greater

opportunity for stability in families. There would be no need for mind-altering drugs.

New Guidelines for Decent Presentation

Traditional formal presentation is often cumbersome, disregarding of individual identity and cultural differences, and gender stereotyped. Therefore, I believe the scope of 'decent presentation' should be widened to cover these factors. Once again, I am suggesting a guideline for what should constitute 'decent dress' in the 21st century:

- 1) Conformity is not required - feel free to express yourself
- 2) Most of your body below the neck should be covered
- 3) There is nothing vulgar written or implied on any items of clothing
- 4) No sexual idea of theme is implied in the overall presentation

I think that should suffice to say somebody has been dressing decently.

Support for Limiting the Number of Working Hours

I support legislating to discourage employers from getting employees to work too many hours. Not a ridiculously low number like 35 (they do that in France) - but we don't want to live in a nation full of people who work 65 hour weeks every week. Not in the 2010s. There are two reasons to this. And it has something to do with the recent advent of female equality too.

The first, obvious one is that it damages a family to have both parents work at that rate. Even with one parent working a 60-70 hour week on a long term basis and another parent working the usual 40 hours, you have got a lot of stress. In the past people (men) were able to work that many hours because they did not have to care for the family. Now that both men and women are working, both need to take enough time to care for their families too.

The other reason is that companies will usually only employ more people if there was a need

to. A law limiting the number of working hours means that companies will have to employ more people to complete their work, rather than just paying overtime to a smaller number of employees. This may not cost the company more really, but it does create employment for more people. And this is very important, especially in times of economic downturn.

The Compassion-First Revolution

Conservatives have often taken to calling people advocating compassionate policies as 'bleeding hearts'. I rather dislike the term as it is meaningless - a bleeding heart is a medical emergency, not a political standpoint. I would like to introduce a new term, 'Compassion first people', to mean EXACTLY what the conservatives call bleeding hearts, without the meaningless terminology. And I announce, as of today, I am a Compassion First person.

I believe we need a Compassion First revolution in politics and culture. Too often the emotions of revenge and hate are allowed to affect our decision making, and it serves nobody. If, however, we decide to put compassion first when we think about what we should do, then we would likely serve the interests of more people. The 'bleeding heart', far from a negative stereotype, is just what the world needs, desperately, now.

Tame that Beast Now!

There are reports that incidents of child abuse, often ending up in the child going to hospital, have been on the increase in America since the US economy started flagging.

This sends a very clear message: that ill effects of the economy impact on the whole society, and in very severe ways too. Therefore I do believe that we should hold the big businesses who can affect our economic outcomes to a higher level of accountability, with consequences to follow if they do not behave. On the flip side, we should also want our governments to regulate the economy more so that it does not go out of whack and go on its way to hurt millions. I think it is great the Obama administration is looking at ways to ensure a more stable economic future for America.

The bottom line: the economic cycle is not merely 'a phenomenon'. It is a monster that can really sting, something that should be put to an end or at least tamed if we can. And I believe we can (it is a man-made monster anyway).

Ending Economic Tyranny

US President Barack Obama has said that he wants to create a "post-bubble" model for solid economic growth once the current economic recession ends.

I think this is very good news, as the 'bubble' version of the economy has hurt far too many people. Whilst it may be argued that investors take their risk in doing their investment and that economic downturns are just an expected feature of the game, who can say that everyday people who have nothing to do with the investment process also deserve to get hurt in the process? Most everyday people don't even understand the economic cycle, having them to carry the burden of the bubble collapses is like a tyrant putting his subjects in jail for no crime, isn't it? It's about time the system changed.

End the Disenfranchisement

The lack of recognition of people's actual everyday life conditions that is often seen in our society has led to an unnecessary hard life for many people, and the unnecessary disenfranchisement of too many for the good of our society. Expecting everyone to be the same or be able to do the same things just isn't realistic.

It surely is something comfortable for many in the mainstream to imagine and create a system around, but this certainly isn't the good way for society, and the bad effects are being felt all around us. The feeling of disenfranchisement from life it creates for minorities has wasted many minds and great spirits, and created a lot of tension and crime around us which is not necessary.

I think that urgent attention needs to be drawn to this issue, and change needs to come quickly.

Chapter 4: The Eternaige Idea

The word 'eternaige' is derived from 'eternal' and 'marriage', and 'eternaige' is the solution for encouraging lifelong marriages that I support. Let me explain.

The word 'eternaige' has several meanings. Firstly, it just means that marriage is meant to be eternal. Whilst not all marriages turn out that way, as there are unfortunately abusive situations people have to escape from, eternity is the ideal marriages generally start with, and couples should be reminded to work hard at this ideal at all times. Secondly, it reminds us that marriage has been in existence for the eternity of human culture, and its core value of commitment for life is also eternal, regardless of political action. Marriage, as it originally stood, doesn't require government validation, and is not affected by changes to political circumstances. For example, no fault divorce, originally a good policy to help women escape abusive husbands, may have made divorce easier for the rest of society too as a side effect, but this should have no effect at all on couples committed to the 'eternaige' ideal. (I am however not suggesting that this necessarily means that marriage should be between a man and a woman, as this historical definition was due to the homophobic culture

of society. In modern times, it is totally legitimate to embrace the more equal definition, whilst striving to keep the core meaning of marriage otherwise. This definition should be a matter of individual conscience.)

An 'eternaige' is simply any marriage (or partnership, as the ideal still stands where there is no legal marriage, for example due to financial considerations) that lives up to the aforementioned ideal. Couples can conscientiously declare that they intend their marriage to be an 'eternaige', but they don't have to do that to be already living in an 'eternaige'.

Upholding the 'eternaige' ideal will encourage more lifelong marriages, I believe, as a result of cultural encouragement for couples to work hard at it. This is inherently better than, for example, the solution of 'covenant marriage', where governments legislate for another category of marriage with different conditions for divorce. Firstly, the covenant marriage solution is politically divisive, and is open to accusation of big government. Secondly, not many couples have taken it up where it is available. This is understandable as the horrors of government enforced continuation of

partnership with an abusive spouse, as happened pre-no-fault, is too much risk for most people, even though the actual risk of this happening is very small for most people. Thirdly, even with additional barriers to divorce, the divorce rate has still been reported to be over 20% in at least one US jurisdiction with covenant marriage, higher than in many countries with no-fault divorce but with another culture. Clearly, it's the culture that matters more. Covenant marriage may even provide a false sense of security, so that couples don't work hard enough on their marriages. Finally, covenant marriage is a solution that is dependent on the government, and can be undone by political circumstances. For example, the across-the-board abolishment of covenant marriage and conversion of all existing covenant marriages into regular marriages can be done by a future government, with the passage of a single act in parliament or congress. The government is never a reliable friend for anyone ever, and something as important as marriage should not rely on their assistance to be successful.

Chapter 5: Other Ideas to Extend Adaptive Family Values

Protect the Family - Privatised Marriage Today!

I am 100% pro-marriage privatization. And if you support freedom, I believe you should do that too. For governments to define cultural institutions is just too statist for me.

This is the most common example cited:

Conservative churches believe that marriage is their province, not the states. Guess what? Gay and lesbian couples think that marriage is their province, not the state's either. It is an option that is both tolerant and conservative therefore.

But it is not just the marriage equality problem that marriage privatization can benefit.

The state has destroyed marriage.

And if we support marriage privatisation and cannot force ourselves to be defined by a state-sponsored institution in the most important union in our lives, what can we do? Advocate

for marriage privatisation. Don't give up commitment though.

The Future. Our Futures.

We do not know what the future holds. Yet we know one thing: our future generations will have to live in it.

Today we still know what is family, what is tolerance and equality, and what is peace. Will future generations know such concepts? Only if we keep them alive.

We can't always control the outside world, but we can always try to create a culture that embodies these concepts, shared amongst families who believe in these concepts.

A Relationship of a Couple of Couples

More and more places around the world are starting to respect the right of gay and lesbian couples to access artificial reproduction services. This is a very great thing, I believe, as the basic human right to found a family is more important than even equal marriage itself, I believe.

However, the situation still leaves many people out. For example, gay dads generally only have surrogacy as a choice to parenthood, and this is not an option for most people (how many altruistic surrogates are there out there?). Similarly, many lesbian mothers are finding sperm donors harder to come by these days with anonymous sperm donation increasingly restricted.

Which leaves me to another idea - there could be a non-intimate couple relationship between a gay couple and a lesbian couple. Within that relationship, all four will have parenting rights. This way, potentially every same-sex couple

can live a family life.

Equality should mean more than just nominal equality. It should mean that we all get an equal opportunity to live the white picket fence lifestyle, which I believe to be the only ideal lifestyle.

The New Concept of Family

I have always supported the idea that family should include not just people that are immediately biologically linked, but also people who choose to be linked for life, and their next generations to be linked too. This practice actually goes back a long way in my culture, with Chinese men vowing to be brothers for life being a common practice in ancient China.

We used to take this pretty seriously in ancient China. I believe it's time that we start to take this more seriously, and formally - especially in an age where we are so lacking in permanent connections with other people.

This new concept of family can have other benefits too. For example, under current adoption practices, in many cultures adoptions can only take place if the relationship with the biological parents are severed. Therefore, you cannot become an extra mom/dad to a kid who already has two parents. However, a new,

'biological plus chosen' based family can cater for this variation.

Alternative to Nuclearism: Why

What is nuclearism and why don't we like it?

Nuclearism is putting the nuclear family up as the only model family and that society should be built around it. Assertions that the nuclear family is necessarily the best building block for society are wrong. I believe that while the family is the building block of society, the nuclear family focused culture has not fulfilled this role well at all.

The nuclear family only focus partly or wholly is responsible for many of the woes of both traditionalists and progressives. When you come to think of it, because the nuclear family is much inferior to a bigger family in absorbing stress, high rates of separation, family trauma, abortions and intergenerational conflict is bound to happen.

Due to the low number of adults in each family, the structure of the nuclear family is more or less fixed and there are only so many roles there, and it is therefore less versatile than the big family. Models of the nuclear family therefore favour fixed, rigid roles. This rigidity is

sometimes the reason for opposition to gay marriages, for example.

This is not to say that we don't like the nuclear family. We just believe that societies shouldn't be built on it solely.

A Way to Replace Conservatism

You all know that I am opposed to conservatism and seek to replace the very idea of conservatism itself with more helpful concepts. Well, here's one thing that will help replace 'the conservatism' and help liberate everybody.

Traditionally, 'conservative values' are sold as a package. The usual conservative package includes such things as lifelong monogamy and abstaining from experimentation with mind-altering substances, but also things such as racism, heteronormativity, homophobia, a lack of regard for peace, and a lack of appreciation for the need of social welfare, as well as blind belief in 'what we have always done in the past' and possibly 'religious fundamentalism'.

I believe the conservative package has only survived because of things like lifelong monogamy and abstaining from experimentation with mind-altering substances

are attractive to many people and provide for the foundation for strong family values and a productive society. Therefore, to make sure the conservative package fails, we need to provide an alternative that provides the good things it provides, but replacing the bad things with freedom and true morality.

Therefore, I have started out by creating essential guidelines to achieve the same goals that conservatism has helped people achieve in the past. Goals like living a good family-orientated life, for example. You should be able to achieve them without adhering to the conservative package at all.

The Responsibility to Reproduce

****This is controversial, but important. Only read on if you have an open mind****

I am going to advocate that, every couple who has the ability to reproduce, should have the responsibility to have kids, and they should have at least three kids if they can.

I know this is going to step on a lot of toes, but let me say this because I have important reasons for wanting this to happen. Some politicians have advocated the same idea ('one for mom, one for dad, and one for the country') but they are saying this just out of fear of population decline. My reasons for advocating people to have kids is much more than that.

In recent decades, with the availability of birth control, some populations have decided not to reproduce, or not to reproduce as much. If equal numbers of every social, cultural and temperamental group are represented in this

voluntary giving up of reproduction, then there would be nothing to worry about. Sadly, for whatever reason, this has centered around people of particular convictions and ideology, and likely to be centered around people of particular natural predispositions too.

They may think they are smart to 'not let their world be hindered by children' (this is how they put it even though I fundamentally disagree), but in reality they give up their chance to contribute to the gene pool.

But if somebody is voluntarily giving up their chance to contribute to the gene pool, then why am I still saying that they should have a responsibility to reproduce? It is simply that, your genes are not just yours, but what nature and past generations have given you.

Therefore, you should do your best to ensure they survive. Because if certain genes that could otherwise do very well dwindle to a small number because of human decisions not to let them proliferate, then other genes get to be more dominant than they actually should be, and that may cause a problem for our world's

future.

NOTE: This is a general thought that I have, and I am NOT going to disrespect any child-free person because of this. This piece is intended to share and develop an idea, not to upset child-free-by-choice individuals.

Whatever Your Aspirations, Unite for a Better Vision

There have been quite a lot of arguments about what institutions should represent in recent decades, and these have heated up to become a cultural war in the last decade or so. Good examples are the family, marriage and what defines a people or nation.

Actually there is no need to fight. We should instead come together to build a new vision of institutions that allows people to reach their desired life and aspirations, be they traditional and solid or radical and creative, and let everyone understand each other and live peacefully together.

A society that allows the traditional and new to coexist together and inspire each other is one that is truly blessed. I myself have the quite traditional aspirations of having a big family, but in a modern, pushing the inclusive frontier way, so that counts as creative and progressive. And I think combining these elements gives beautiful ways of living and fulfilment!

A Multiculturalism of Institutions

Different social institutions have suited different people, both from different ethnic cultural backgrounds and from different subcultures arising from the commonly shared conditions of people who may otherwise come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They have been instrumental in sustaining stable, long term relationships, the cornerstone to any great society. Therefore, we need to give them recognition, and all of them equally. We need to integrate the diverse elements of our society, rather than giving them the choice of assimilation or disenfranchisement, because there is high likelihood that many people will choose the latter and we will soon have a disenfranchised society ripe for criminal elements to rise up all over it.

The importance of the above point has been stressed over and over again in the treatment of indigenous people in many countries, for example, but has not been extended to apply to all of society as a principle in many places. It is something that we would wish to support at every turn, and should be a standard part of multiculturalism.

Chapter 6: Notes on Marriage Equality

This chapter contains notes and articles I wrote in support of marriage equality, during 2011-14. Marriage equality has been won in all but six Western countries (Northern Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Australia) and it also looks like winning in many of these very soon. Hence the movement may become history in the West in the foreseeable future. However, the arguments listed here are good general arguments for an 'adaptive family values' culture, and should therefore remain relevant well into the future.

How Marriage Equality Will Save Marriage and Families

We all need to recognise one thing: marriage is in crisis. Marriage rates have been declining for many years, and the decline has not halted unfortunately. If the trend is not reversed, I am afraid that many of us will live to see a time when marriage will have become a minority concern. It's a tough reality, but it's one that we need to face.

In response to this phenomenon, there have been efforts on marriage promotion. However, these have been very limited in their success. Just why marriage promotion is not working very well needs to be studied, and programs will need to be improved upon. I suspect that opponents painting marriage as outdated, hierarchical and elitist, amongst other things, have had at least some effect. I don't believe in any of that rubbish personally, but I know people who do. In the long run we need strategies to defeat comprehensively the 'liberation' ideology that has torpedoed marriage. However, there is no way we can win either the short or long term game on this without marriage equality.

Looking into the future, there is one clear threat to marriage promotion: that much of the younger generation are starting to see marriage as an exclusionary, bigoted institution. In fact, it is happening right now - there have been plenty of reports of young people including pleas for marriage equality in their ceremonies, feeling conflicted about sending out the marriage invites, etc. Not every young couple feels the same disgust about the exclusionary aspects, but as long as a significant proportion of the younger generation do feel this way, I suspect few of them would be too happy to get on board marriage promotion or be actively pro-marriage in culture. Not when it is promoting an institution excluding and hurting their gay and lesbian friends, and in many cases, family members.

Let me put it more bluntly: when marriage clearly excludes gay and lesbian couples, every word of marriage promotion will hurt their feelings - this is literally true, and something that cannot be said any milder. As a result, marriage promotion will rightly be seen as a hurtful exercise by many young people. Even I, a supporter of marriage, have had trouble explaining to my friends that whilst I support marriage I don't support

the exclusionary aspect of the marriage laws out there. I simply have given up on talking about the matter most of the time.

Most of the older generations will have a difficult time grasping the concepts outlined above. After all, their generation of gay people are often more closeted, and many were/are not that interested in marriage. In any case, the older generations developed their attitudes towards marriage without the same-sex marriage issue in consideration. However, they must try to put themselves in the shoes of the younger generations if marriage revitalisation and promotion is to work in the younger generations. After all, the most important place for marriage to flourish, the most important cohort for which marriage must remain strong, is the younger generations - because they are or soon will be raising the next generation.

Just like on many other issues, standing still and not changing a thing does not mean we can go back to the past. It does not mean conservative values won't miss out. Inaction is dangerous, especially when the world is changing. If a significant portion of a whole generation

becomes ambivalent to marriage, the damage may take many generations to repair. On the other hand, if we take advantage of the opportunity of marriage equality and usher in a new era of public conversation and enthusiasm about marriage, things won't change overnight, but over time they will, in the direction we want things to change. And whilst political issues often take a long time to resolve, ten years down the line it may already be too late to grasp this opportunity. Now is the time to support marriage equality, for anyone who is serious about the future of marriage and family values in society.

Answering Some Arguments Against Marriage Equality

1. Gay marriages destroy the purpose of procreation in marriage, and leads to the destruction of the ‘conjugal’ and ‘fruitful’ reasons for marriage.

If we are to be strict about this, any proven infertile couple should be excluded too. However, that would taint marriage as a harsh and exclusionary institution, and in an age where it has become an option rather than a necessity, would drive many away from it. In the eyes of many particularly younger people, excluding gay couples is just as cruel. Again, rigidity should not apply. We can still strongly stress that marriage is for procreation as a primary purpose, whilst still stressing that we need to be inclusive and compassionate otherwise, and therefore cannot use black-and-white rules to shut people out. This isn't too hard to understand, is it?

2. Marriage is meant to be a complimentary institution.

This is a useful concept, but a really wishy-washy rule. Not all opposite sex couples are complimentary in their character, and certainly not all opposite sex couples are complimentary in a particular way that same-sex couples cannot be, unless you are talking about the physical only.

If physical complementariness is what you're talking about, many infertile couples should be excluded too, as should couples where one member was born with certain 'intersex' medical conditions (e.g. Klinefelter's syndrome - look it up if you don't know what it is), as they are not strictly complementary either. The trouble is that, many men with Klinefelter's don't even know they have it! Again, complementariness is often the case, but we cannot be rigid here.

If spiritual complementariness is what you're talking about, many straight couples come together because of similarity rather than complementariness (think many geeky couples), or because they are complimentary in non-traditional ways (e.g. the alpha female and the omega male), and these have clear parallels in same-sex couples too. Of course most people still live out traditional gender roles and always will. But society has already decided that non-traditional gender roles are OK too for the minority whose lives are like that - and as

long as they are heterosexual they can legally marry too. Therefore, if those people are allowed to marry legally, why not same-sex couples?

3. Gay Couples are Not the Same Thing as Straight Couples

This tends to not be very convincing for those who know gay couples well, again more commonly found in the younger generation. Therefore, this argument is often voiced and accepted by older opponents of equality. And for good reason too - for those who have observed and known gay couples, they will find that there isn't a clear line they can draw, except regarding physical body parts.

Different straight couples bond over different things or reasons, and their relationships are held together by very different central concepts. Technically, they can be divided into different categories too. In this sense maybe we can have the glamour-marriage, the religious-marriage, the Chinese-marriage, the Irish-marriage and so on. But we don't do that - marriage is a broad church and a society wide brand, and for a good reason. On the other hand, one straight couple's relationship may have more in common with a same-sex

couple's relationship than with another straight couple, other than the body parts. So it doesn't make sense to draw the line at the body parts thing, right?

4. It has Historically Been This Way

There was much confusion and ignorance around same-sex attracted people in history. They were just not allowed to live openly as couples. Now that this is no longer the case, not only is denial of legal marriage ridiculous and arbitrary, it threatens to delegitimize marriage in an age where already it is seen as 'only a choice'. In fact, that some couples can be allowed to live openly in relationships but not to be married is entirely the creation of the 'liberation' of the 70s and 80s anyway. As conservatives, we should not just allow marriage equality, but we should encourage gay couples to get married, like society encouraged everyone living in a couple relationship to get married back when family values were strong. Marriage equality presents a chance to re-assert pre-liberation culture.

5. The Family has been destroyed enough in the 20th century

This had nothing to do with gay people, and it was all due to 'liberation ideology', which marriage equality does not come from and is often diametrically opposed to. Many marriage equality supporters are opposed to 'liberation ideology' in almost every form. It is also inconceivable that marriage equality would lead to any change in most marriages, the way that no fault divorce changed the landscape for example. No fault divorce applied to every single marriage, whilst same-sex marriages do not change a thing about any heterosexual marriage.

In fact, for marriage promotion to work and to have a strong case against liberation ideology, we need to show everyone that traditional values are to be aspired for, can be aspired to by everybody, and are not bigoted or apartheid-supporting. When there is a consensus about gay people not being able to change their sexual orientation, if marriage excludes gay people it will always be seen as bigoted and apartheid supporting by a large proportion of the younger population.

6. It Defeats the State's Purpose of Benefiting Marriage

If we think of the purpose of marriage in society narrowly, the state also should not benefit any infertile

and childless marriages. However, part of the way marriage works is by upholding marriage as a brand for the whole society, and that brand needs to be inclusive and non-bigoted to have the most appeal to potential supporters for it to work that way. The benefits of this will return to the majority of marriages – i.e. child bearing, fertile heterosexual marriages, by encouraging marriage and a strong marriage culture in the whole population. Hence same-sex marriages still support the state's purpose of benefitting marriage, although more indirectly. Moreover, further benefits can be seen in a general return to commitment and family values, reduction of STI and HIV rates in certain communities, etc.

7. It Imposes Its Acceptance on All Society

This is a myth. See the Canadian Civil Marriage Act 2005 and what it says, for example. When a law is written that way, to impose its acceptance on all society would require ANOTHER change in law, which may even be unconstitutional in most countries.

On the other hand, opponents of marriage equality are forcing THEIR version of marriage down the throats of everybody else, by having it enshrined in national law. It

doesn't matter than theirs is the traditional version - it is no longer accepted as a consensus in most of the West either, and is thought of as offensive by many people in our society.

When there is a clear conflict between two visions of a shared thing (our laws), we should proceed to consider the most inclusive solution. As the equal definition of marriage also includes all heterosexual marriages, but the heterosexual definition excludes same-sex marriages, society should opt for the more inclusive definition, which would satisfy to a degree everyone on both sides, as nobody's actual rights get compromised.

Reports about businesses being 'forced' to serve gay couples have not been due to marriage laws. In fact, many such reports have come from Australia, the UK and many other countries where marriage equality is not yet the law. It has to do with the anti-discrimination law in these countries, which often say that businesses must not serve gay people, and by extension gay couples, any differently to the way they serve straight people. Marriage does not appear to factor into this.

Marriage Equality: A Case of Gays Saying 'Look At Me Now'?

To many observers, gay couples campaigning to be included in marriage seems like yet another 'Look At Me Now' moment. We have long repealed any laws against gay behaviour, we have given them couple rights in society, in many places we have given them the option of civil unions, and yet they are screaming for more. Aren't we fed up by now? Won't they take what they have and go away quietly?

Once upon a time I thought like that too. Then I studied the topic carefully, and I found out just how wrong I was.

The gay and lesbian couples seeking marriage and a family life, even if they do not have children to raise, are actively seeking to join the age old tradition of marriage and commitment. They have actively rejected the 'liberation' movement, which has promised them a life of endless hedonism, lots of sexual freedom and no

institutions to rule their lives by. Just like us, they have chosen to reject the postmodern promise of endless freedom and have chosen to embrace instead the tradition of commitment and family values. Not many people out there are aware of this, but for choosing to side with tradition they often face the ridicule, disdain and outright discouragement of more 'liberation' orientated gay and lesbian people. For choosing to adopt our values and join our lifestyle, they have been derided as assimilationists, people who are ashamed of who they are and seek conservative society's approval at all costs. We, the people who embrace family values, are their natural home. To reject them here too would be far too cruel and indeed inconsistent with our compassionate family values. To reject them would also be to confirm that their critics are right, that being gay means you cannot embrace family values, that you must embrace 'liberationism'. I really don't think that is the right message to send.

The fact that gay and lesbian couples are actively rejecting 'liberation' and embracing the tradition of marriage is another thing we should take heart to, and may even be able to use as a starting point for a general return to family values in society. The fact that gay and

lesbian couples, who live in a culture where just a decade or so ago 'liberation' was the norm, have come to reject it so decisively, can be a great conversation starter for a wider societal discussion on marriage and family values, and why they represent a superior lifestyle to 'liberation'. Again, it is an opportunity we can only take if we first embrace the idea of marriage equality first.

A related argument is that gay marriages will never be universally accepted as real marriages, not by many churches at least. So why should they bother? Well, I personally still see an ideal for the future where divorce rates go back down to 1950s levels for all couples - again this is not universally accepted as a goal. Shall we just give up on everything then? I guess not. If it's good for family values in the end, we should embrace it. Others may take a longer time to do so, but we should be part of the process to help along any idea that may bolster family values for our future generations. Letting go of this (or any other) opportunity is not something we can afford to do, when the future of family values is already looking this shaky.

What Marriage Really Is, and How it Relates to Marriage Equality

One major concern of modern times is that marriage rates have declined, generation after generation. Non-marriage births have risen all over the West. Another concern with marriage right now is the sky high divorce rates. A society with divorce rates above 40% really is not sustainable in the long run, I believe.

The proposed solution is to restart a conversation about what marriage is and what the commitment means. Remake the case about marriage, procreation and family - specifically how marriage is a commitment that is not just about the 'love' and desires of adults, but rather a stabilising institution that forms a good foundation for a family. I totally agree that this would help a lot. As a society, we should discuss and hopefully come to a conclusion that marriage is not just about love or adult desires, but is about the formation of families and providing for them a stable structure.

Some people have suggested that including gay couples in marriage would take us further away from the above consensus. In fact, some have even suggested that it is because society has lost the above consensus regarding marriage that the idea of gay marriages has become appealing to young people in society. I disagree with all of this. In fact, I not only disagree with all of this, but I will take the opposite view: embracing marriage equality is the first step in having the public conversation about marriage, in getting the public to be receptive of our arguments, and the only way in which a consensus about the nature of marriage can be re-established.

Honestly, if the arguments about marriage, procreation and stable families are tied to necessarily excluding gay couples, it wouldn't work. It would severely turn off at least a significant proportion of society - many of which will be young people, the very people who the conversation ought to engage to be successful. Many young people now believe that excluding gay and lesbian couples from marriage is unacceptable, period. Through these lens, any argument purporting to make a case to exclude gay people from marriage will be seen as bigoted.

I propose an alternative: we need to allow gay and lesbian couples to get married as a matter of equal compassion and inclusion. Once this issue is sorted out, the clean air then lets us deal with the matter of what marriage is. No longer will idea about marriage, procreation and stable families be associated with bigotry. My critics say that including gay couples necessarily defeats the procreation and family idea of marriage. I strongly disagree. We already do include infertile and childless couples in marriage - as a society, we have long believed excluding them will be too cruel an act, whilst including them will not affect the function and ideal of the majority of procreating marriages and families. Whilst the older generation may be used to the idea of marriage excluding gay couples, for much of the younger generation, their exclusion is just as cruel as excluding infertile couples. Including gay and lesbian couples, who are by definition infertile couples, would not really distract from the idea of marriage being for procreation and for the stability of families resulting from the procreation act, any more than allowing heterosexual childless or infertile couples to marry (as we currently do) would. In reality, being rigid rarely works. I believe it would make perfect sense to say that marriage was meant to help couples set up family by

encouraging procreation and then providing a stable structure for the resulting family, but being an inclusive society, we also extend this institution to cover those couples who unfortunately cannot procreate but are living in similarly committed arrangements.

Marriage, Procreation and Same-sex Marriages

Some people have argued that, as marriage was clearly designed for procreation, same-sex couples just do not belong in marriage. They also say that allowing same-sex couples to marry will mean that marriage is redefined to be about the emotional needs of adults.

I agree that marriage was clearly designed for procreation and it isn't just about love. Therefore, I do not support the idea of 'freedom to marry', I only support 'marriage equality'. There is no absolute freedom to marry just anybody you like, and there should not be. But including same-sex couples in marriage is not about this. Marriage is a specific institution, and it should be kept that way.

The core of marriage is about procreation, it is the reason marriage exists. However we do allow infertile couples to get married. Anti equality advocates argue that this is because they still 'resemble' the arrangement for procreation, a wishy-washy argument that may also apply to at least some gay couples, e.g. butch-femme couples, and may be even applied to all gay couples since all of them are in conjugal

relationships. I would rather argue that we let infertile couples marry because we are a decent society, and do not wish to exclude infertile people from marriage, so we have decided that infertile couples who otherwise live in a marriage like commitment are allowed to be married, even when they cannot procreate. We have made this decision as a society because the cost of maintaining absolute purity regarding marriage and its roots in procreation are not worth the discriminatory outcome that would taint our society so badly. The same case can be clearly made too regarding same-sex couples.

More importantly, including infertile couples in marriage has not affected the central idea that marriage is for procreation, making the 'cost' of such inclusion only technical, and the case for excluding them only palatable to ideological purists, and not to the majority of the population where practical outcomes matter most. This is because infertile couples are a minority, and extending inclusiveness to them does not affect the central idea of marriage. To believe that by including gay people, comprising 2% of the population, in marriage is going to change what marriage is, is a ridiculous proposition. To uphold ideological purity now is even more ridiculous, when it has already been lost by including infertile couples. Excluding a whole class of

people from an important institution in society because of a characteristic they were born with clearly taints the conscience of our society, and is clearly not worth it when the benefits are only to maintain some ideological purity, that has already been lost anyway.

A related argument against same-sex marriages is that heterosexual marriages are 'complementary' whilst homosexual relationships are not. However, it is the same argument as the one above, just without spelling out the specifics. I cannot see where all heterosexual marriages are complementary and gay relationships are not, except in the field of procreation. Again, in the field of procreation, infertile couples can be said to be not strictly 'complementary' in function again, at least in some cases (e.g. where there is no womb for creating offspring in the woman). Again, to insist that this 'complementary' idea be an absolute requirement of marriage in every case is just another form of ideological purity over practical outcomes, and pertaining to an ideological purity that has already been lost anyway.

How Many People are Affected by Marriage Equality?

Some people say that marriage equality will not benefit a lot of people. I would completely disagree.

The simple thing is that, the calculations given by those people for the percentage of people affected by marriage equality is wrong. Some suppose that as 2% of the population is gay and most are not in a hurry to get married, the issue affects less than 1% of the population. But my take is different. As it is basically an issue of dignity, equality and human rights, it affects the whole 2%+ of the LGBTI community, interested in marriage or not. And then it also affects their family and friends, so you have to times that by a few fold at least. Therefore, marriage equality benefits around 20% of the population roughly, in my opinion.

Also from TaraElla...

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #1: A Noughties Princess Spirit Story

The early 21st century is a time of unprecedented opportunity for those coming of age. It is a time when many young adults set out to achieve their dreams, be it starting their own business, starting a political movement, or propelling themselves to superstardom. Angelle's dream is to become Cultural Royalty of Pacificland, thus achieving what her mother couldn't. Her vision is based on freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all. However, she soon finds that whilst change appears to be in the air, the resistance is often even greater. And when the forces against change mobilise, those wanting a slice of success often bow to their agenda, while those fighting for change simply give up. With her own dreams on the line, will Angelle stay true to her values? And if she does, will it be enough to make a positive difference? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?